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STUDY PROJECT

WHY THE COMBINED FIELD ARMY

BY

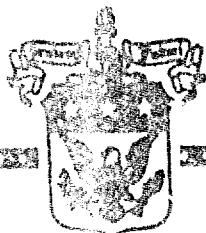
COLONEL C. M. JACKSON, JR., MI

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USAWC Military Studies Program Paper

Why The Combined Field Army

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the present day need for the Combined Field Army (ROK/US). It reviews the history of the Combined Field Army (CFA), the role it has served as a deterrent force and coalition force role model. A review of the command and control structure echeloned above the CFA is made. Shortfalls in the structure are identified and evaluated with respect to a perceived need for a ground component command subordinate to the Combined Forces Command (ROK/US). A conclusion is reached that there is a definite need for a ground component command (GCC). It is posited that a GCC would be representative of the maturation of the ROK/US military and political relationship. The study concludes with a review of the Combined Forces Command command and control structure examining closely the issues of operational control versus combatant command authority of Commander-in-chief, U.S. Pacific Command; Commander-in-chief, Combined Forces Command; and Commander U.S. Forces, Korea. It makes the recommendation that the Commander, U.S. Forces, Korea should have combatant command of U.S. forces

in Korea and that Commander-in-chief, Combined Forces Command should have operational control of U.S. forces in Korea.

Why The Combined Field Army

INTRODUCTION

It is critical that commanders prepare themselves to fight in coalition warfare alongside the forces of our nation's allies. As it has been throughout the twentieth century, teamwork in joint and combined operations will be an essential ingredient in any battles Army forces fight.

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May 1986

The Korean war has been called the most complex war in our history. The United States, acting as the executive agent for the United Nations Command (UNC), received, integrated and employed in combat land, sea and air forces from 21 nations.¹ Some 40 years later the legacy of that monumental

combined venture is found in the Combined Forces Command (CFC) and the Combined Field Army (CFA). The Combined Forces Command is the warfighting headquarters for the Republic of Korea and United States forces. The Combined Field Army designated in 1980 is one of three field armies deployed along the demilitarized zone (DMZ). The CFA is composed of two Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) corps. It is commanded by a U.S. lieutenant general and has a combined staff.² There are no U.S. combat forces assigned to either ROKA corps however, the 2d (U.S.) Infantry Division is under operational control of the Commander, U.S. Army Element CFA who is dual-hatted as Commander, CFA.³ The other two field armies (First Republic of Korea Army - FROKA and Third Republic of Korea Army - TROKA) are nationally pure ROKA forces each commanded by a four star general. Questions have been periodically raised about the efficacy of a U.S. lieutenant general operationally controlling ROKA corps that themselves are commanded by lieutenant generals. TROKA exercises command less OPCON of the CFA corps.⁴ Although the nationality of the Commander, CFA is certainly a factor, it is not germane to whether or not Korea needs a CFA for warfighting. I will focus on force structures required for effective combined warfighting and CFC organization for combat.

Clearly, political considerations and national interests will always be factors in a consensual alliance; I will

attempt to consider these factors to the extent that they have been articulated by ROK or U.S. entities. I have made reasonable assumptions that will, in part, underpin the operational environment during the near and mid terms. These assumptions are that there will be no change in the division of North and South Korea and that North Korea will remain the principal threat; that both the Republic of Korea and the United States remain in alliance with the primary mission of deterrence; that the United States will retain one infantry division in Korea and that if deterrence fails the United States will, as part of a coalition effort, employ ground, sea and air forces to assist in repelling aggression and restoration of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Korea.

Combined Field Army: Background and Organization

As noted earlier, the Combined Field Army was so designated in 1980, it had been previously designated as I CORPS (ROK/US) Group. CFA is responsible for defending the historic Chorwon Valley attack approach from North Korea. To the east of CFA is FROKA which defends the eastern half of the Korean Republic. To the west of CFA is TROKA which has responsibility for defending the western attack approaches in Korea along the Kaesong-Munsan axis. As noted

earlier CFA has two ROKA corps to accomplish its mission.

The CFA staff provided the model for the composition and integration of the CFC staff. The CFA staff is approximately 60 percent Korean and 40 percent American. The chief of staff (a U.S. Army BG), the secretary of the combined staff (a U.S. Army COL) and the C4 (a U.S. Army COL) are the only U.S. staff principals, all others are Korean with American deputies.⁵ Although many U.S. personnel still serve one year tours, the CFA staff is considered to be one of the most cohesive and high performing staffs in Korea. It has been noted by observers that language and cultural differences appear to be less a barrier to effective communications on the CFA staff. This is in some measure attributed to a "eat, work and play together" ethic that is free from the distractions of family and the city of Seoul.⁶ Cultural differences however do exist with resultant bias and misperception. My observation of the C2 operations branch over a recent 18 month period led me to believe that Americans thought of themselves as culturally and professionally superior to the Koreans they worked for. The Koreans tended to ignore their American co-workers and "titular subordinates" and go their own way. While this environment did not overtly detract from the intelligence produced, one cannot help but wonder how much more could be achieved if this element had been truly cohesive. This

isolated observation notwithstanding, the general performance of C2 and indeed overall CFA staff appears to be dynamic and highly professional. CFA has served as the conduit and model for the introduction of U.S. Army doctrine and concepts. Airland Battle Doctrine and Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield both entered the Korean Army via CFA. For over two decades CFA (or its predecessors) has served as the individual and collective role model for the Korean Army.⁷ In so doing it has been the catalyst for interoperability between ROK and U.S. forces - perhaps a degree of interoperability not achieved with any other ally. Interoperability though, is only a small aspect of readiness for combined warfare. Consideration must be given to training/operations tempo. On an annual basis CFA and its subordinates participate in exercises Team Spirit (reputed to be the largest exercise in the free world), ULCHI-FOCUS LENS and FOCUS-CLEAR - all combined and all multi-echeloned. Additionally, when one considers the factor of two allies vice sixteen, as in NATO, there is a much higher probability of greater training benefit accruing to the ROK-US alliance. LTG (RET) John H. Cushman, former commander of I CORPS (ROK/US) Group and the U.S. Army Combined Arms Training Center, has noted that the greatest training benefit for coalition warfare occurs at echelons above corps (EAC). If that is true, then CFC and CFA in particular must rank among the world's combined forces as being in a very high state of

training readiness.

The Operational Environment

Thus far my discussion has focused on the background of the combined commands and the organization and training readiness of CFA. There should be no argument that CFA is a force in readiness. Trained, forward deployed and sitting solidly astride the Chorwon Valley approaches, CFA is prepared to repel and defeat the North Korean invader. The North Korean threat is a formidable one. The Republic of Korea and forward deployed U.S. forces number slightly over 690,000; they are opposed by North Korean forces numbering well over one million. The North Korean Army (NKA) estimated to be 930,000 strong is an offensively structured, forward deployed army. It has artillery forward deployed in hardened positions along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that can strike the South Korean capital of Seoul without leaving their positions. It has large armored and mechanized formations supported by self-propelled artillery. North Korea boasts a special operations force (SOF) that is estimated to be 100,000 strong.⁸ The air and naval forces of the North are structured and deployed to complement and support the offensive structure of the army. It is relatively easy to conclude that the composition and

disposition of the NKA is to execute a short, violent, highly mobile war - a North Korean version of blitzkrieg. The North Korean campaign plan probably envisions the rapid isolation of Seoul while decisively engaging the CFC with conventional forces and SOF.

The Chorwon Valley, as noted earlier, is an historical avenue of approach. In June 1950, NKA T-34 tanks swiftly rolled down the Chorwon Valley, broke through ROKA defenses, seized Seoul and continued south. The other major axis into Seoul is the Kaesong- Munsan - so named because of its point of origin, Kaesong, North Korea and intermediate point before entering Seoul, Munsan, South Korea. TROKA has the responsibility for defending the Kaesong-Munsan axis. The Kaesong-Munsan enters Seoul directly from the north while the Chorwon approaches and by-passes Seoul from the northeast. The Chorwon Valley would provide the principal armor-mechanized approach with a strong combined army supporting attack along the Kaesong-Munsan axis. In the eastern sector it is expected that NKA forces will attempt to fix FROKA in an attempt to preclude a reinforcement of the western sector. To recapitulate, TROKA defends axis Kaesong-Munsan, CFA defends axis Chorwon and FROKA defends the eastern axes - therein lies a very significant problem.

Seoul, the political, economic and cultural center of

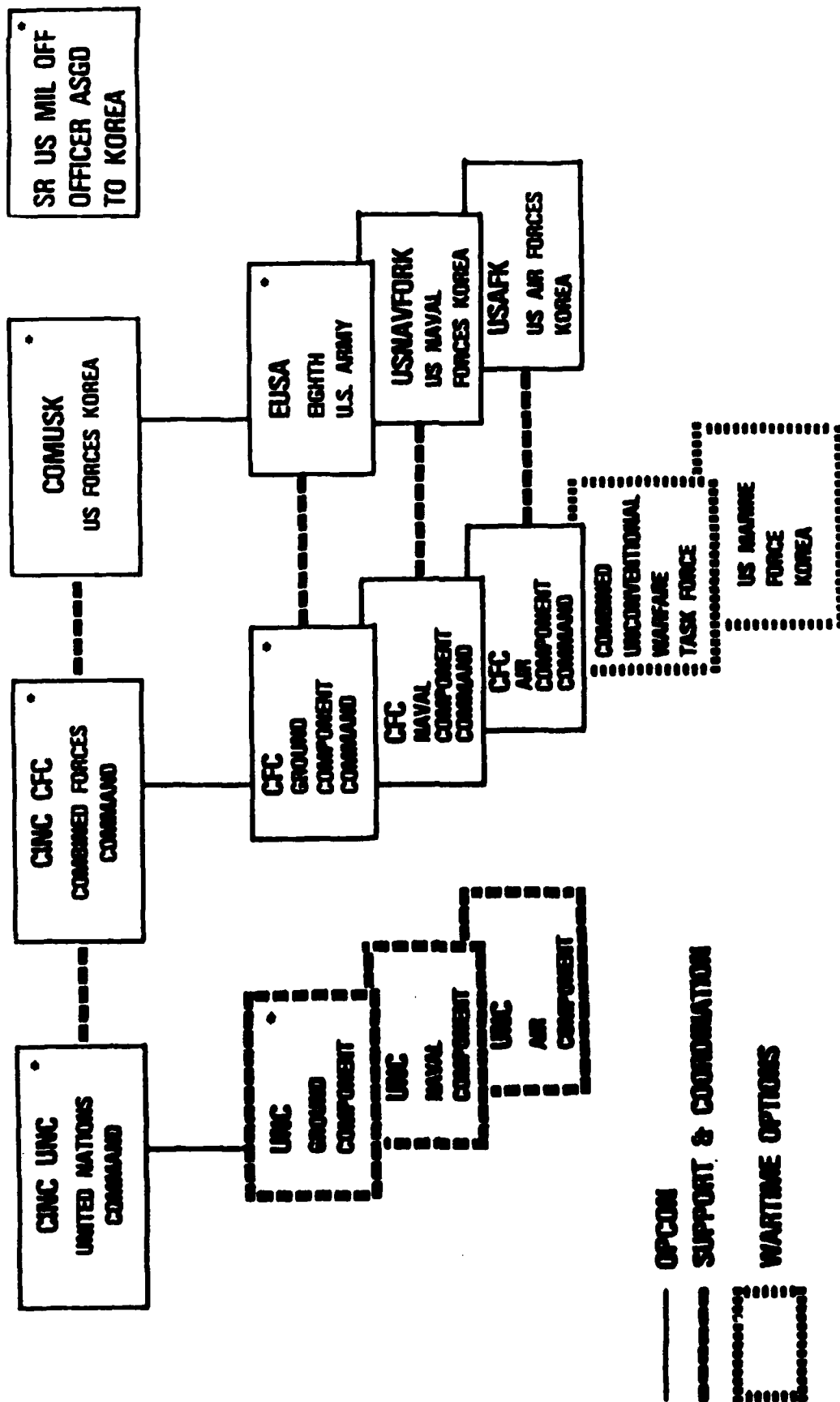
the Republic of Korea, with its population of 10.2 million, roughly one quarter of the total national population, is defended by two field armies. Twenty-five miles from the DMZ, Seoul is at once, of immense importance and in great danger. Unlike 1950-51 when Seoul was lost and recaptured twice, 1990 affords no such option. Seoul is the strategic center of gravity for the Republic of Korea. Given its strategic importance and geographical proximity to the DMZ it is impossible to trade space for time in a conventional manner in order to absorb a North Korean attack. Seoul must be defended at all costs.

The genesis of the divided responsibility for the approaches to Seoul is found in the late 1970's when President Carter announced his decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Korea. In response the Republic of Korea formed TROKA as a warfighting headquarters to replace the then I CORPS (ROK-US) Group. When President Carter's decision was reversed, also changed were the plans to put TROKA on the DMZ. TROKA was not however, disestablished, it was simply stationed south of Seoul and remained a "full-up" warfighting headquarters. At that time there were only two field armies forward, I CORPS (ROK-US) Group (redesignated CFA in 1980) in the west and FROKA in the east. In 1983 the decision was made to bring TROKA forward. The CFA western boundary was moved to the east giving it responsibility for

the Chorwon approach only. TROKA assumed responsibility for the Kaesong-Munsan axis. The divided responsibility for the defense of Seoul represents a significant problem for the respective field army commanders and the commander of the CFC Ground Component Command. A situation such as this would be fraught with difficulty under uni-national conditions; it is made even more so in a coalition environment. Control of defensive and counteroffensive operations, fire support and rear area combat operations require precise and timely coordination. Although difficult it is not an impossible mission. Perhaps the high state of training readiness will bode well for successful mission accomplishment.

The Ground Component Command

The responsibility for conduct of the ground war lies with the Ground Component Command (GCC) one of four component commands of CFC. (See Figure 1). The other commands are the Naval Component Command (NCC) commanded by a ROK vice admiral, the Air Component Command (ACC) commanded by a USAF Lt Gen (who is multi-roled as DCINC UNC, Deputy Commander U.S. Forces Korea (D/COMUSK), and commander 7th Air Force), and lastly the Combined Unconventional Warfare Task Force (CUWTF) commanded by a



• SEVEN HATS OF THE SENIOR U.S. MILITARY OFFICER ASSIGNED TO KOREA.

FIGURE 1: MAJOR COMMANDS AND COMPONENT COMMANDS IN KOREA.

ROKA major general and activated only during wartime.⁹ The GCC is commanded by a U. S. Army four star general who is multi-roled as the CINC UNC, CINC CFC, COMUSK and CG Eighth U.S. Army. He also performs duties of the senior U.S. military officer in Korea representing the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to the ROK-US Military Committee. Much ado is made about the "six hats" of the CINC CFC - sometimes adding yet a "seventh hat" as Commander UNC Ground Component.¹⁰ Given that the present day ground component of the UNC consists of an approximate 30 man honor guard performing duties that are essentially ceremonial and (UNC) command post security in nature, a four star commander appears excessive. With the "hats" issue explained, let's return to the CFC, GCC.

The GCC unlike the other CFC components has no dedicated staff and indeed no headquarters. The GCC staff, in the same manner as the CINC CFC, is a multi-role organization. ROK and U.S. Army personnel assigned to Headquarters CFC informally perform the duties of the GCC staff, indeed non-Army personnel also perform GCC duties. When the GCC was activated it was generally considered that the CINC CFC and army staff members (ROK and U.S.) could adequately perform the command and staff functions of GCC. This approach is not without precedent in the pacific/far east theater. During the early days of the Korean war General MacArthur

served concurrently as CINC Far Eastern Command and as Commander, Far Eastern Ground Forces in Korea.¹¹ He later relinquished command of ground forces in Korea to LTG Ridgway but technically returned command of ground forces elsewhere in his theater.

It is a widely held American belief, with a growing Korean constituency, that there is a need for a separate GCC. A GCC with its own commander and staff. The present GCC command and staff arrangement does not permit exclusive command and staff focus on the land battle.¹² The dual/multi-hatting of the CFC staff is an operational distraction when one considers that the warfighting time and space focus of CFC and GCC are significantly different. Staff support for the field armies is diffused and lacks dynamic interaction on a day to day basis in an environment where ground combat would predominate. The lack of a dedicated GCC is quite arguably not a "warstopper"; the CFC has functioned well without one for over a decade. On the other hand the lack of a GCC falls far short of being a combat multiplier.

At a time when many relationships and structures are in great transition it is most appropriate to critically review the ROK-US warfighting organizations. The maturation of both the ROK-US political relationship (partners vice leader

and led) and the professional competency of the ROK armed forces portend a time for change. We should keep in mind that the North Korean threat remains utterly unchanged and as such any changes in the ROK-US relationship should focus on enhancing the collective warfighting abilities of the alliance.

CFA Transition to GCC: Impact of Change

The preceding discussion has developed two salient problems in the ROK-US Combined Forces Command that directly affect the Combined Field Army. The lack of a dedicated GCC and divided responsibility for the defense of Seoul. The present impediment to the establishment of a separate GCC is insufficient U.S. force structure (spaces). The most obvious source for the needed force structure is the U.S. Army element of CFA. When this study was initiated, the Republic of Korea was not yet willing to agree to the disestablishment of the CFA. In late 1989 the U.S. and Korea agreed in principle to the establishment of a separate GCC commanded by a ROKA four star general. When that change will take place is unknown however, best estimates predict the not too distant future. Disestablishment of CFA will give TROKA responsibility for both avenues of approach that affect the defense of Seoul.

The second order effects of a ROKA general officer as the GCC commander include the reduction of a widely held Korean civilian perception that Americans command and control ROK forces for purposes other than warfighting.¹³ The ROK general officer effectively gives a Korean overall responsibility for the planning and conduct of the land campaign for the first time in 40 years.

When the CFC staff is freed of GCC responsibilities it will have an increased ability to focus on the larger issues of its theater of war. In a sense it will see more forest and less trees. The highly trained CFA staff should easily transition to an effective GCC staff with a not too steep learning curve. The CFA has served the ROK-US alliance well. It has been a competent and capable role model and a force in readiness.

A Larger Issue: Command and Control

We must now turn to the larger and more difficult issues of (1) subordinating U.S. forces to a foreign commander and (2) the operational control (OPCON) and combatant command (COCOM) issues that relate to CINC CFC. Presumably, the 2d (U.S.) Infantry Division and probably a two or three division U.S. corps would be subordinated to

the Commander GCC in wartime. There is an oft stated but unwritten maxim that says U.S. troops will not be subordinated to foreign commanders. A brief look from 75 years ago to the present leads one to believe that this is either a maxim of convenience or one that has come into unwitting disuse because of long time precedent. Some of the most notable precedents include: the subordination of the all-black 369th Infantry Regiment under the French in World War I; the subordination of the 1st and 9th (U.S.) Armies to the British 21st Army Group in World War II; the present day subordination of major U.S. land and air combat units to the Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT) under the command of a German general officer.^{14, 15, 16} Present day plans in Korea require, initially, the 2d (U.S.) Infantry Division and upon arrival the U.S. corps to be subordinated to a ROK corps and field army respectively. A near constant in the preceding examples is that the "supreme" or overall commander of the Allied forces was American in every instance save the black regiment in France. Clearly then, the concept of subordinating U.S. forces to a foreign commander is neither new or unpracticed. With respect to the GCC of CFC there is not only the military necessity to achieve unity of command and effort but there is also abundant precedent that unmistakably implies that in our past and present coalition relationships, resolution of the U.S. forces subordination issue was sought and achieved.

There is a larger context of command and control (C²) within the CFC that impinges not only upon the GCC but on the alliance as a whole. This study would be remiss if it did not address, at least, the salient issues.

At the heart of the CFC C² issue are the fundamental differences in ROK and U.S. perspectives on the defense of the Republic of Korea. It is fair to say that the government of the Republic of Korea intends to defend its territory without hesitation, at all costs and to the extent that military prudence permits. U.S. and UN members prefer to have more options with respect to renewed hostilities.¹⁷ Inherent in the expression of those differences is the current composition of CFC peacetime OPCON units. That composition which is wholly ROK, save two U.S. fighters on strip alert, is both a theoretical limit to CINC CFC's powers and a source of growing discord within the alliance.¹⁸ ROK command of the GCC will do little to assuage Korean concerns, indeed dissatisfaction, with CFC C². ROK concerns have sometimes been interpreted by Americans as a desire for a Korean to assume the position of CINC CFC. That, I believe, is off the mark. Both the government of Korea and Korean military authorities appear to accept the principle of preponderance of power vice preponderance of force as the basis of the CINC CFC being an American officer.

The Korean concern is a fundamental question about the reliability of the U.S. defense commitment and the true intentions of an ally that will not put his national forces under the OPCON of the combined force commander notwithstanding the fact that he is an American.¹⁹ The C² structure in Korea is extremely convoluted. In brief, the Korean Minister of National Defense (MND) and the ROK military services chiefs of staff exercise command less operational control of major ROK combat elements that are under the OPCON of CINC CFC - additionally the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) exercise OPCON over ROK units for counter infiltration operations in rear areas and over Home Land Reserve Forces, CINC UNC exercises OPCON over UN units and some ROK and U.S. units whose mission is to ensure enforcement of terms of the Armistice Agreement, COMUSK exercises OPCON of all U.S. forces in Korea (OPCON derived from CINCPAC who exercises COCOM) except for the two fighter aircraft on strip alert for CINC CFC.²⁰ As previously noted the peacetime combat forces under CINC CFC OPCON are, for all practical purposes, entirely ROK. It is only upon U.S. declaration of Defense Condition II or III that CINC CFC receives "limited" OPCON of U.S. combat forces.²¹

The senior U.S. officer can provide continuity of command by serving concurrently as CINC CFC, CINC UNC, COMUSK and CG EUSA with appropriate command systems for each

command. He does not however, have either a single staff organization to link the functions of each command nor a separate staff entity for each command. U.S. staff members, as a matter of course, are assigned to two or more staffs. In practice this officer, as CINC CFC, exercises several command functions, concurrently or sequentially, at his convenience.

The foregoing seems to suggest that within the U.S. structure there are adequate means and measures for CINC CFC to transition to war; not addressed is the fundamental question posed by our ally regarding CINC CFC lack of OPCON of U.S. forces. If CINC CFC is American the argument of foreign control of U.S. forces is rendered moot given that there are no legal or doctrinal prohibitions and that 75 years of precedent has tended to fill a doctrinal void. Why then does not CINC CFC or for that matter any American combined force CINC in similar circumstances exercise OPCOM or COCOM of the U.S. element of the combined command? There are no reasonable answers.

Conventional wisdom clearly supports the premise that unified action is the most effective means of conducting combined warfare. Further, training as one would fight and fighting as one has trained are co-equal axioms that are apropos from squad to large formation combined commands.

Doctrinal guidance for combined operations in peace and war is contained in Chapter IV of JCS Publication 3.0, Doctrine for Unified and Joint Operations. This doctrine addresses many aspects of combined operations in peace and war which can be summarized as good principles.²² It fails however, to address the difficult issues of U.S. and combined COCOM and OPCON and transition to war. It does partially address the delicate issue of response to crises short of hostilities by saying that U.S. national forces may be compelled to respond unilaterally because of time driven requirements. It further states that alliance members should be informed in advance unless the planned unilateral action would be jeopardized. This is a partial addressal of unilateral response to crises because it does not consider allied operations of a similar nature. Our allies have sometimes been criticized for taking unilateral action on the basis of national self interest. Our doctrine should, at least, tacitly recognize similar requirements for coalition partners.

The CFC OPCON problem has additional roots in the fact that USFK is a subordinate unified command of USPACOM. CINCPAC exercises COCOM over U.S. forces in Korea which by law cannot be relinquished to a subordinate. The resultant C² environment in Korea requires COMUSK to seek and gain approval from CINCPAC before forces are placed under CINC

CFC's OPCOM.

To strengthen and promote harmony in the Korean alliance on the basis of a broad and continuing mission, strong consideration must be given to giving COMUSK COCOM of U.S. forces in Korea and placing those forces under the OPCON of CINC CFC. The subordinate unified command status of USFK is a political and military impediment to effective combined operations. In essence I am recommending that USFK be designated a combatant command because of the nature of the ROK-US alliance and its attendant organizational and C² considerations. COCOM would give the present COMUSK the exclusive authority to exercise or delegate OPCON of U.S. forces in Korea. It would also strengthen his ability to provide authoritative direction in joint/combined training and logistics. Additionally, I am recommending that CINC CFC be given OPCON of U.S. forces in Korea -- so long as COMUSK is in a dual role as CINC CFC. Changes of this magnitude would have significant deterrent value because they would send a clear and unmistakable signal to North Korea that the alliance not only endures but has grown in unity.

The Vietnam experience demonstrated that a warfighting subordinate unified command, with combined responsibilities, operates in concert with its allies and the national command

authorities of both nations leaving USPACOM in what is essentially a supporting role. The same characteristics would apply to Korea. Clearly the recommended changes are radical and without formal precedent in recent times. Change however represents the only constant in recent world events. The maturation of the ROK-US relationship demands change. The alliance should not be encumbered by vexing but resolvable command and control problems that detract from its effectiveness. The ROK-US alliance must remain strong in the face of the last remaining cold war enemy. The principal consideration is not whether the armed forces of the Republic of Korea will eventually achieve parity with North Korea, but rather, continued realization of the U.S. national military strategy of successful deterrence -- avoidance of the second Korean war.

United States armed forces in the Combined Forces Command are a tremendously powerful factor of deterrence not only on the peninsula but within the region. Until North Korean attitudes change, our presence for deterrence is required. If deterrence fails the Combined Forces Command must be in the best warfighting position attainable. The changes proposed in this study will ensure success in pre-hostilities and war.

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